

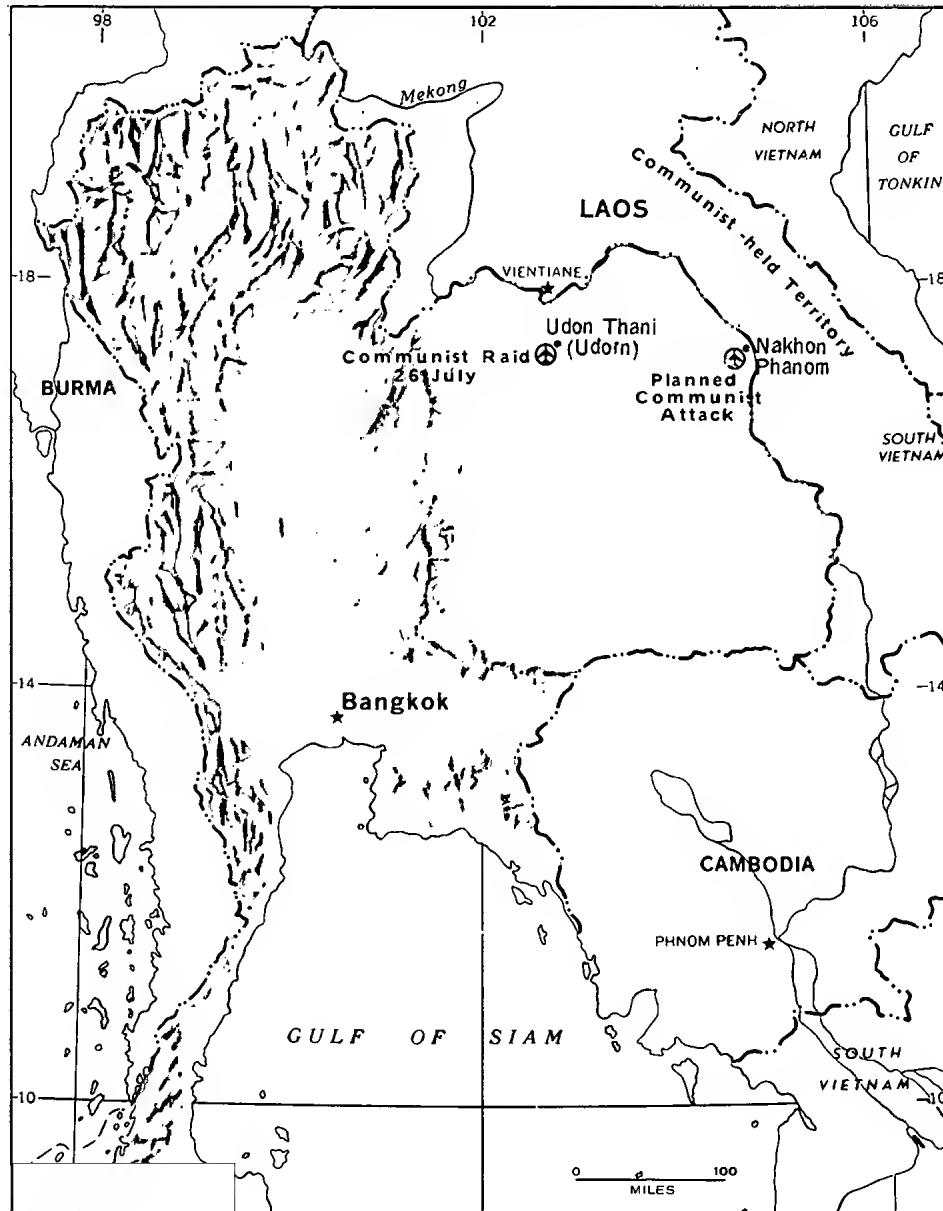
The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 12 August 1968



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Indications of Planned Communist Attack in Thailand



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
12 AUGUST 1968

1. South Vietnam

No significant enemy action took place over the weekend, but signs of early and possibly widespread attacks continue to multiply. Although Saigon is still high on the Communist target list, it now looks as if any big push against the city would come five to ten days after the offensive is kicked off elsewhere.

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2. Thailand

The Communists may be gearing up for an attack on Nakhon Phanom airbase.

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Thai insurgents operating near the base met early this month to discuss an attack and are caching automatic weapons. A 27-man demolition team is also said to have established itself north of the base and a team of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao operatives is allegedly slated to arrive soon to help out.

Some of these reports may amount only to groundless scuttlebutt stimulated by the raid against Udorn on 26 July. Nevertheless, Nakhon Phanom, just across the Mekong from Communist-held territory in Laos and used extensively for air attacks in the Lao infiltration corridor, would be an obvious Communist target.

Thai security authorities in any event are taking no chances. They are reinforcing the garrison defending the airbase and have placed it on alert.

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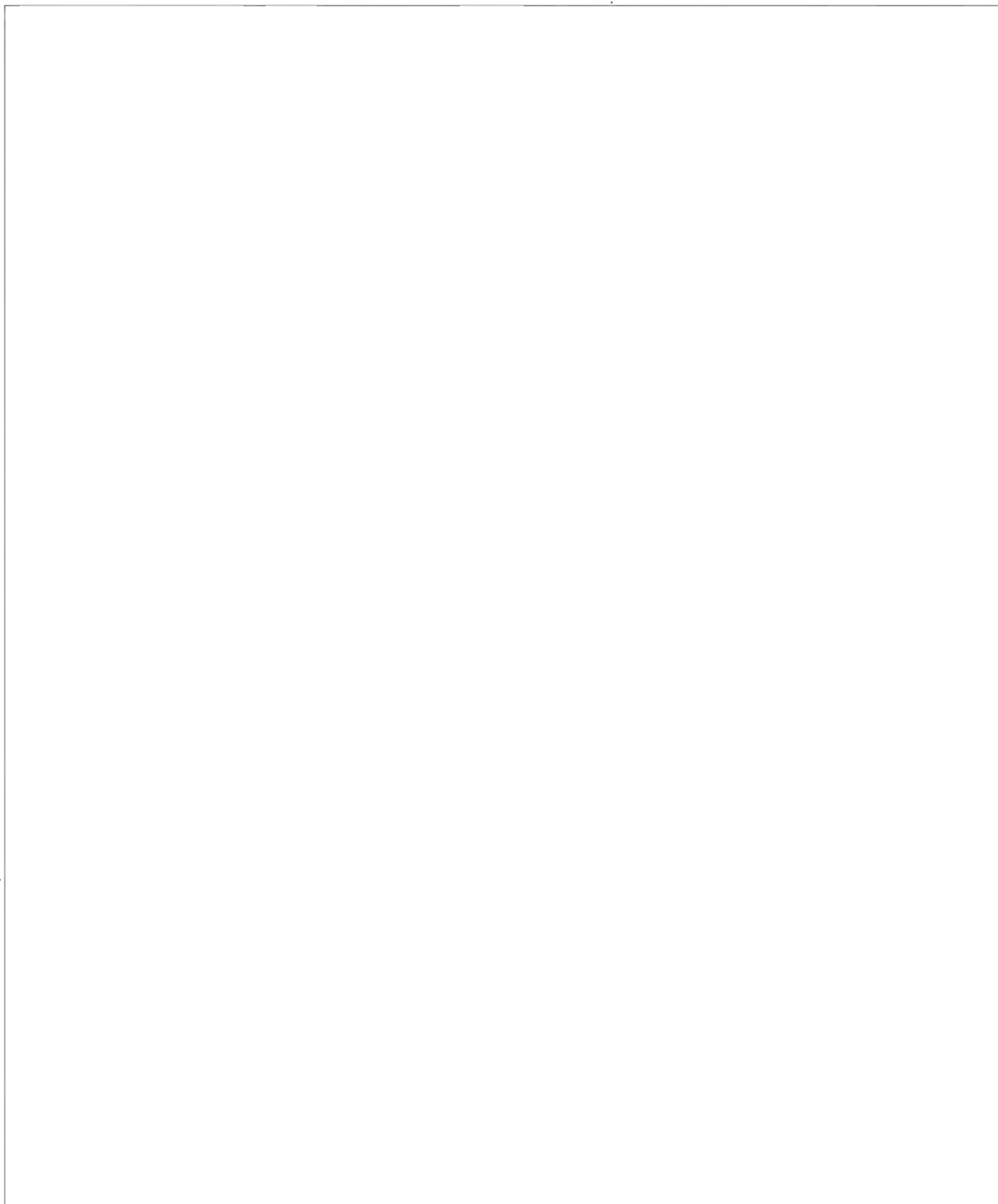
3. Czechoslovakia

Ulbricht follows Tito with a somewhat different mission. The East German Communist leader is probably making the trip to Prague to foster the impression back home that relations with Czechoslovakia, sorely strained by Pankow's opposition to Dubcek's reform-minded regime, are improving. Ulbricht would thus hope to allay some of the unrest which lies just below the surface in East Germany.

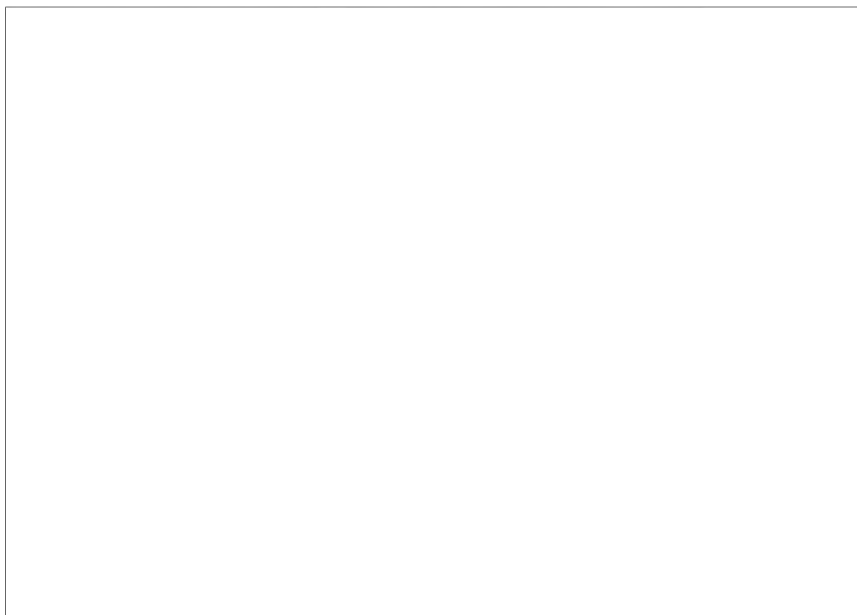
During Tito's triumphant visit, the Czechoslovaks published the drafts of some new statutes they plan to present for approval at the Communist Party congress next month which are bound to upset Dubcek's opponents at Bratislava. One calls for a federal system of two Communist parties--one for the Czechs and one for the Slovaks--which would be only loosely administered by a central party organization. Another would, among other things, permit greater participation by non-Communist groups within the National Front.

Soviet, Polish, and East German forces continue their war of nerves along Czechoslovakia's frontiers. The completion of a rear services exercise on 10 August was followed the next day by the start of a joint communications exercise. However, there have been no significant changes in the deployment of Soviet, Polish, and East German ground forces.

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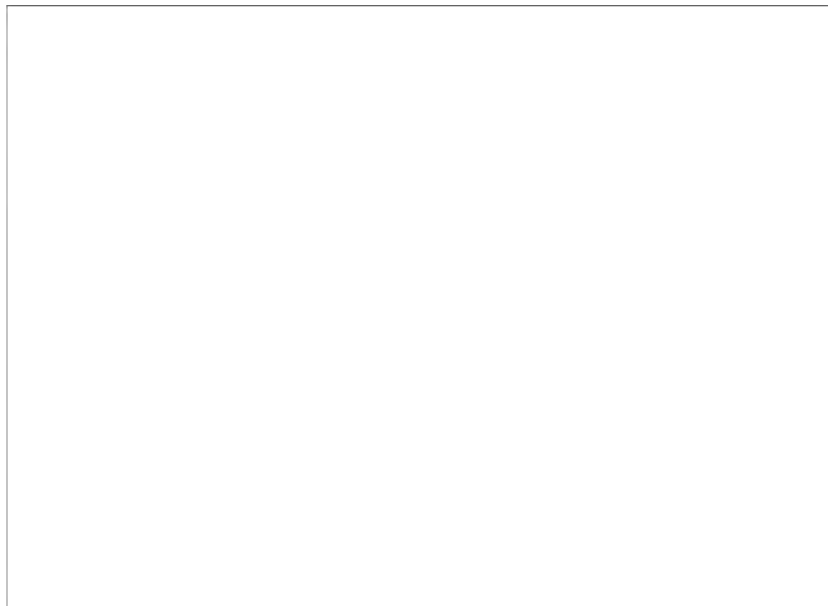


4. Jordan



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5. Communist China



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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12 August 1968

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

12 August 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Le Duc Tho in Moscow: Le Duc Tho arrived in Moscow Saturday and will stay there "two or three days" before going on to Paris, according to the Soviet news agency. [REDACTED]

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Tho may well be returning to Paris armed with new North Vietnamese decisions on both the military and the diplomatic front. His lengthy sojourn in Moscow indicates that he may be spelling out in some detail whatever new tactical departures Hanoi has decided on and may be trying to line up Soviet support for them. Similar Soviet - North Vietnamese exchanges took place when Le Duc Tho passed through Moscow going to and returning from the Paris talks in June.

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Hanoi on Prisoner Releases: The Communists seem to be involved in some new maneuvering on the prisoner issue. The North Vietnamese press agency issued a statement on 11 August demanding that the US and Saigon "immediately set free all those whom they have illegally arrested" and return them to North Vietnam through the Demilitarized Zone or in North Vietnamese territorial waters. Hanoi used its usual elliptical language to avoid acknowledging North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, but the statement clearly refers to North Vietnamese prisoners in allied custody, including the 14 sailors the US is preparing to release.

US and North Vietnamese embassy officers in Laos discussed the procedures for releasing these 14 prisoners on 10 August. The Communists claimed that the US plan to return the prisoners via Vientiane presented unspecified problems and that Hanoi preferred they be freed near the Demilitarized Zone or in nearby North

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Vietnamese waters. The North Vietnamese said that the military problems this would cause could be solved by the US stopping its bombing and other attacks in the area. They acknowledged implicitly that Communist military activities would also have to be curtailed.

Although Hanoi accepted three North Vietnamese sailors through Vientiane earlier this year, it may wish to shun further use of this channel because of the publicity which can be focused on Vientiane.

On the other hand, Ambassador Sullivan speculates that the Communists may, among other possibilities, wish to use the prisoners to arrange a temporary ceasefire in the Demilitarized Zone as a means of meeting one of the US suggestions for "reciprocity." Another possibility is that Hanoi is preparing for a large-scale exchange of prisoners in connection with the Paris talks. The US pilots held in North Vietnam probably are considered a trump card by the Communists, and one which they undoubtedly will play eventually in an attempt to extract US concessions.

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Pole on North Vietnamese Intentions: The Polish commissioner to the International Control Commission in Laos took a rather rosy view of North Vietnamese intentions in a recent chat with Ambassador Sullivan. He suggested that the first "phase" of the Paris talks was now over and "serious negotiations should begin soon." The Pole agreed with Sullivan's suggestion that North Vietnamese stalling might be connected with the US political campaign. But he said that "nominations are now over (sic), negotiations can begin." He doubted

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that a "third wave" of Communist attacks in South Vietnam was in the cards because they would be against Hanoi's best interests. Sullivan correctly notes that the Pole is unlikely to have any inside information to back up such views.

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More on Revolutionary Administrations: Communist propaganda continues to give heavy play to the establishment of new administrative organizations in South Vietnam to consolidate Communist control of the countryside. A Viet Cong broadcast on 10 August claimed that "hundreds of persons" in Binh Long and Phuoc Long provinces in northern III Corps have set up these "revolutionary administrations." The broadcast said that "incomplete statistics" show that "hundreds of villages" in these two provinces had held elections for village "people's councils" and "people's liberation committees." The local people were said to be happy to have an "administration that really represents them."

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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